



Natural Selections

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SUSTAINABILITY IN SCIENCE: A DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A CAREER IN SCIENCE

AAKANKSHA SINGHVI AND PALLAVI SACHDEV

“Sustainability” derives from the Latin word *sustinere* (tenere, to hold; sus, up), to support or endure. A major concern of all postdocs is our path to initiating and sustaining a fruitful career. While approximately 79% of postdocs start out aiming for a tenure-track academic position, only about 30% end up with one.¹ What does it take for postdocs to decide whether or not they want an academic job? What is a successful strategy for getting and sustaining one? Discussing this was the agenda of our round-table discussion with Dr. David Roth (Chair, Department of Pathology, New York University) at the fourth annual postdoctoral retreat. To follow up on the highly interactive session with him, we polled Rockefeller University (RU) postdocs and faculty on issues raised at that discussion. In this article, we compile the opinions voiced at the retreat and in the surveys, and intend for it to kindle your thoughts and discussions. We do not intend to pass a definitive judgment on any issue.

Defining sustainability in science

Our discussion title was vague and open-ended on purpose. We wanted postdocs to tell us what concerned them most when thinking of their path to getting and sustaining a scientific career. Our (the authors’) thoughts included (i) getting a tenure-track position; (ii) sustained funding; and (iii) becoming good mentors. In addition, to some, this meant balancing cost effectiveness with creativity, or sustaining a flow of creative ideas; ensuring that their data holds validity over time, and doing science sans compromises. One RU faculty member defined this as the ability to conduct efficient research with effective reagents, tools, and manpower in a cost-effective manner. Dr. Roth thought foremost of the ability to get good students to the lab. While a good career in science needs all of the above, it is interesting that many of us worry as much about the ability to sustain scientific temperament and creativity as about funding and job-seeking. In the next few sections we summarize these various facets of building a scientific career, dividing them broadly into the ability to get and sustain (a) a job (b) funding and (c) scientific temperament.

Sustainability in developing a scientific career

The median age to get a faculty position is 38, and the first Ro1 is 42.^{2,3} Given the strong competition, what makes one a good job candidate in academia? Dr. Roth opined that good publications, pedigree, and recommendations suffice. Everyone agreed, but is that all it takes? RU faculty added the following to the list. First, networking: most RU postdocs and faculty surveyed felt that networking at meetings and seminars was important. We find this of note since Dr. Roth, as well as most PIs in a recent *Science Careers* survey⁴ downplayed networking. Second, every single RU faculty member surveyed stated that good commu-

nication skills were critical. This agrees with communication ranking #1 in a 2009 faculty survey on attributes of a successful postdoc.^{4,5} Given that communication ranked #7 in a national postdoc survey,⁴ we remind RU postdocs to be aware of the importance our faculty gives to communication skills. More reason to keep using those lab meetings as a practice ground! Teaching was another ingredient, but only for those applying primarily to teaching colleges. Mentoring undergraduates or summer interns, interestingly, did not make the cut.

We asked people to rank, in decreasing order of importance, the relative weight of the following in choosing a job: location, salary, start-up package, department chair’s leadership and faculty profile. Dr. Roth, to our surprise, brought up “the identity, vision and personality of the department chair” as his primary concern. He opined that having a supportive, mentoring, and visionary department chair was important to his decision, something he is glad to have considered. This is not something we had thought of. Faculty at RU thought that the startup package and location of the university (to attract good students and postdocs) superseded the faculty profile and department chair. Postdocs, on the other hand, rated the faculty profile highest. Salary remained the bottom contender on everyone’s list.

Competition arises from disparity between supply and demand. Does this imply that the system trains more people than science needs? People were divided on this one. Some thought that this may be impacted by the lack of a retirement cut-off for baby boomer faculty. Others suggested that if all careers post-Ph.D. are included, we are training just the right amount.

Part of this issue is that many postdocs and faculty consider non-academic positions as alternate careers as opposed to a primary career path. It need not be so, but many of us struggle with the decision to not set up a lab, often fraught with much soul-searching and indecision. Given that 7 out of every 10 of us are in this position, this is not trivial. Approximately 95% of postdocs felt that they would appreciate honest input from their PI on their ability to pursue an academic career. Every single PI polled, including Dr. Roth, said that PIs will suggest an alternate career to their mentee, if they felt that he/she was not making the right decision based on mentee’s strengths. We were surprised by this, because we were not aware this really happened. Understandably, some faculty hinted that it may be unwise for them to pass personal judgment on someone’s career—what if they are mistaken? We hope that this unanimous request from postdocs for candid feedback will encourage honest discussions between postdocs and PIs. Finally, while many postdocs are keen to explore non-academic careers, many feel unsure of how to go about this, and who to tap for guidance. Be that as it may,

the majority of people said that finding an alternate career remains the primary responsibility of the postdoc. Obviously PIs cannot be our role model for a career outside the lab. The onus is on us, be it tapping into alumni networks, Nature-Networks, etc., or proactively enhancing our resumes with skills we think we may need. The most we ask for, and hope to get from our PI, is a sounding board, general advice, guidance in pointing us to the right people or direction, and a supportive environment.

Sustainability in running a lab

Two trends are gaining prominence in science: translational research and collaborative science. Are these fashionable trends or a shift in scientific methodology? Everyone agreed that there is more hype for translational research than needed. While not listing it as a critical aspect of research, most people ranked it from critical to somewhat important and from “yes, important for NIH objectives” to “over emphasized/a load of ***/a way to fool granting bodies.” Postdocs tend to see this as important for publishing and funding, much more than faculty do. It seems, though, that translational research is here to stay, something to bear in mind.

Such science necessarily translates into collaborations—not all of us can run from genetics and biochemistry to tissue samples and clinical models with aplomb. Not surprisingly, 85% of postdocs feel that multi-lab collaborations will increasingly become the norm, compared to 64% of the faculty. The need for collaborations in the long run brings back to us the importance of networking—with our peers as much as with senior faculty.

Speaking of collaborations, we asked whether it was appropriate for junior PIs to collaborate with their previous mentors. Response: while not advisable, it is

not a strict no. However, the discussion at the retreat indicated that, in most cases, work done in collaboration with one’s mentor will likely not be taken as your independent work. This is important to note for tenure-track positions. Therefore, starting as postdocs, we should look for projects that will define our independent roles and help augment our careers as postdocs and later, as independent investigators.

Sustainability of scientific temperament

How do we know we will be able to sustain creativity, select and mentor students, learn people- and cost-management? Is it a handicap to not have these skills honed during a postdoc (a concern voiced during our round table)? While it may seem daunting, all faculty we surveyed said that these skills are easy to develop with common sense, and not at all a handicap. But they did highly recommend other skills that we should consider critical and seek training in during our postdoc—the ability to write grants, and review papers. They suggest that postdocs should ask to be involved: to review papers, write our own papers, and help in writing grants. In addition, we should learn the skill of framing important questions with testable hypotheses, and stay focused only on the skills needed to get the job done. The bottom line: learn how to get grants, you will manage them fine. Learn how to get papers out, new ideas will follow just fine.

Summary

At the end of our discussion and polls, postdocs signed off wishing for more mentorship and interaction with their PIs and more help when gearing for non-academic routes. We urge all faculty to be more involved in helping chalk out the career path of their postdocs. At the same time, we also remind postdocs to be more

pro-active. If you are missing some aspects of mentorship from your PI, it is wise to tap into alumni, seniors, or other PIs. It remains our responsibility to build a sustainable career, one to last us a lifetime.

A side comment on sustaining an annual post-doctoral retreat

The fourth PDA retreat was held at the Hudson Valley Resort, Kerhonkson, nestled

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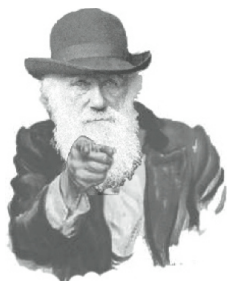
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in the Shawangunk mountains of the Appalachian ridge. 89 postdocs attended this year. It remains our goal, with active encouragement from Dr. Paul Nurse, to increase the participation of postdocs in future retreats to at least 150. Many attendees felt the retreat to be a great place to network, hear people describe their wonderful science at RU, and get to know people. It does help to make RU feel more collegial and collaborative. We are glad to note that most postdocs were happy with the amount of time given for inter-lab interactions, talks and organization at this retreat. By popular demand, we will continue with the overnight stay for next year’s retreat, despite the 30% cut in the PDA budget for the next fiscal year. Look out next year for more great RU science, another engaging keynote speaker, more group games like Trivia, and a best talk award. We hope we can sustain the involvement and satisfaction we saw among those that attended this year into next year!! ☺

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The Rockefeller University: A Hidden Jewel in the Tradition of Rockefeller Art Collections

KRISTEN D. WINDMULLER

In June 2005, then 89-year-old David Rockefeller pledged a \$100 million bequest, seventeen paintings, and an additional \$5 million per year during his lifetime to New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the museum founded in 1929 in part by his mother Abigail "Abby" Aldrich Rockefeller. Just one week later, he pledged a similar package to Rockefeller University (RU), the scientific institute created in 1901 by his grandfather John D. Rockefeller, billionaire founder of Standard Oil.¹ While at first the Rockefeller name might be the only obvious tie between the two institutions, both RU and MoMA are inextricably linked by the Rockefeller family's tradition of art collecting.

Throughout New York City, the Rockefeller name is associated with many well-known art institutions: the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden at MoMA, The Asia Society, The Cloisters, and the Michael C. Rockefeller Collection and the Department of Primitive Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art are just a few. Internationally renowned, these collections include some of the finest examples of modern, Asian, African, and Oceanic art. While its art collection is not widely known, RU's collection of paintings and sculpture places it among these impressive stewards of the art world.

With the approval of RU President Dr. Detlev Bronk in the late 1950s, David Rockefeller began collecting Abstract Impressionist paintings for the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall (built 1958). Aided in the selection of pieces by Alfred Barr, MoMA's first director, and Dorothy Miller, MoMA's first curator of painting, Rockefeller amassed a collection that included works by Bradley Walker Tomlin, James Brooks, Joan Mitchell, and Jack Tworkov. The hall's architect, Wallace Harrison, may have been tangentially involved in the selection process as well, which might explain the strong harmony between the art and its environment. Barr and Miller were both intrinsic in the building of both private and university Rockefeller collections, including those of Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller that are now on view at Kykuit, the family estate in Pocantico Hills, NY, and those of MoMA and RU. The resulting compendiums of art are extremely complementary to one another, constituting a nearly representative account of the important painters and sculptors of the 20th century. In the early 1970s, the collection was expanded again with purchases made for the Benjamin and Irma G. Weiss building under the guidance of Miller and Dr. Frederick Seitz. With the careful guidance and discerning eye

of Miller and others from MoMA, RU's collection quickly grew into a snapshot account of modern art.

Spread throughout the university's campus, the RU collection is strong in abstract and non-representational works, with approximately 80 paintings, 15 sculptures, 15 photographs, and 31 modern prints.



Installation view of *Big Twist* (Bryan Hunt, 1978) outside the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall. Photograph by the author.

The majority of objects are on view in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall, with some paintings and prints in the Caspary guest rooms and in Weiss. Some representational work is found in the form of Audubon nature prints placed throughout campus, as well as several portraits and portrait busts. The Hall's white walls and well-spaced International Style object hang reflect the conventions of museum display set by MoMA during the late 1950s and 1960s. Dominated by a palette of red, black, and white, the current installation is complemented by furniture and rugs in the same color scheme, creating a harmonious setting that highlights the large, boldly painted works. Ranging from 1951 to 1991, easily recognizable pieces such as an Alexander Calder wind mobile (*Three Black Moons*, 1951) are juxtaposed with lesser-known pieces such as Hedda Sterne's 1957 *Roads, Number 9*. Sterne was the only female member of "The Irascible Eighteen," a group of Abstract Expressionists that included Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning, whose

work during the 1940s protested against the conventions of traditionalist museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. While her works have been collected by MoMA and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, the Romanian-born Sterne has been overlooked in favor of her male peers, a reflection of both latent misogyny in art history, and the fact that their works fit more conventionally within the aesthetics of the Abstract Expressionist movement. Also linked with the surrealist movement, Sterne's work reflects the innovations of modern engineering through sweeping color fields that allow the eye to travel a path throughout the canvas, simulating the physical trajectory of urban growth. Much of the collection's strength lies in its ability to present a full picture of a period in art by focusing not only on blockbuster images, but also those by lesser-known artists whose works complete our understanding of art history.

Now Lifetime Trustee and Chairman Emeritus of MoMA as well as Chairman of RU, 94-year-old David Rockefeller continues his philanthropic efforts in the arts. *Untitled* (1999), a bronze sculpture by

Joel Shapiro situated near the tennis court, was given by Rockefeller in commemoration of the university's centennial anniversary in 2001, as was the 1982 Chuck Close print *PHIL/MANIPULATED* within Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall, and the Frank Stella sculpture in Weiss. Later that year, a dozen sculptures from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden at MoMA made their home for eighteen months on the grounds of RU. Pieces by Alexander Calder, Henry Moore, Claes Oldenburg, Eduardo Paolozzi, and others were exhibited in conversation with RU's architecture and with its landscape, designed by American landscape artist Dan Kiley. In discussion for several years, the loan of objects coincided with the university's centennial. The collection's curator Cynthia B. Altman later said in a 2004 interview, the loan celebrates "the importance of establishing an atmosphere to both inspire and reflect the creativity vital to scientific discovery."² Now on extended loan from MoMA, sculptures including Herbert Ferber's *Homage to Piranesi, I* (1962–63), Ettore Colla's *Continuity* (1951), Bryan Hunt's *Big Twist* (1978) remain on view at RU outside the Abby dining room.

Rockefeller University continues to slowly grow its collection, with several donations in recent years. In addition to the previously mentioned centennial gifts from David Rockefeller, the university received a gift of about seven paintings from the Estate of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III. *Tremor*, an abstract painting by Spanish-born painter and sculptor Esteban Vicente, was donated to the university by the artist's widow Harriet Vicente in 2004. Painted in 1991, the large, warm-toned painting fits in seamlessly with the early-1960s rust-colored couches and Abstract Impressionist paintings that hang just outside the Abby dining room. With relatively few pieces in storage, the addition of new pieces to the collection guarantees a re-hanging; works within the



Installation view of *PHIL/MANIPULATED* (Chuck Close, 1982), *The Undeciphered* (Fossil Series) (Enrico Donati, 1961), and *Genghis II* (Jack Youngerman, 1962) in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall. Photograph by the author.

dining room are periodically re-hung, but generally stay on view for several years.

Hidden behind the gates and walls of Rockefeller University, the collection started by David Rockefeller nearly six decades ago is an impressive example of the Rockefeller family's interest in art collection. When viewed in tandem with the collections of MoMA and the collections at Kykuit and other sites, RU's collection helps to create a comprehensive picture of one of the most revolutionary periods in art history. ☉

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Competition vs. Calories

ADRIA LE BOEUF

It is often said that losing weight is easier when you do it with a supportive group around you. How about a competitive group? This fall one lab on campus went on a quite successful mass diet, inspired mostly by a spirit of absurd competition. The goal for each individual was to either lose or gain 10% of their body weight in three months. Five lab members entered the competition officially, though a few others participated unofficially. The competition was contagious, with significant others and family members joining in as well. Most participants, official and unofficial (as measured by who put in their \$20), intended to lose the 10%. However, surprisingly, two participants decided to try to gain the 10%, intending to gain muscle mass. After approximately one month, the two gainers had given in, one effectively forfeiting and the other switching

plans toward losing the 10%. The different individuals attempting to lose weight have been working with different strategies for weight loss. Some are following simple rules, like avoiding meat. Others are exercising more, others are calorie counting. Still, others are not doing much at all. To lose one pound per week, a healthy amount of weight loss, one must reduce one's weekly calorie intake 3500 calories below one's burn rate (2000 calories/day for an average adult).

At the time of this writing, the lab has collectively lost more than 100 pounds. That's 350,000 calories not eaten. That's equivalent to 1,291 small McDonald's French fries or 2,187 pints of free beer (courtesy of Faculty Club). The contest is nearly finished, and it seems that a healthy spirit of competition is an excellent motivator! ☉



This month Natural Selections interviews Andrea Geoghegan Procko, Graduate Fellow in the Laboratory of Yeast Molecular Genetics (Fred Cross Lab). Country of Origin: USA

New York State of Mind

1. How long have you been living in New York? I moved here in August 2003 to start my PhD.

2. Where do you live? For the entirety of my time here, I've lived in Graduate Student Residence (GSR) on campus. I've upgraded apartments a few times, but have settled in a one-bedroom on the top floor.

3. Which is your favorite neighborhood? I think my favorite neighborhood is very mood-dependent. Still, for me, nothing beats Central Park. I probably owe a piece of my sanity to Olmsted and Vaux. I love people-watching or wandering around the Ramble until there's no one in sight. I clear my head by running there and love going to shows there during the summer.

4. What do you think is the most over-rated thing in the city? And underrated? Overrated: Shopping at chain stores and/or eating at chain restaurants that you can find everywhere else. Underrated: The uniqueness of all the neighborhoods. It would be an absolute outrage if New York ever became too homogeneous and lost the character that exemplifies this city.

5. What do you miss most when you are out of town? Being able to get around so easily. Not needing a car for transportation is very unique in American cities. The subways and buses are impressive, and in a pinch, it's nice to be able to hail a cab at pretty much any hour.

6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be? Fewer cars. Traffic here is crazy, and I just don't see the point to most of it on such a tiny island.

7. Describe a perfect weekend in NYC. My perfect weekend would be in mid-May (with the azaleas in full bloom at Rockefeller). As for what to do, there are of course too many choices for one weekend. It would involve some combination of getting outside (usually a loop in Central Park; otherwise, biking along the west side is one of my favorites, especially when they have free kayaking), eating good food (including a trip for dim sum in Chinatown and a long brunch at a sidewalk café), finding a little culture (maybe a visit to the Natural History Museum or a free performance outdoors), BBQing at Rockefeller or having a game night with friends, and still having time to wander and get lost somewhere new. I guess it might have to be a long weekend.

8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC?

I met and married my husband in NYC, so my most memorable experience will be pretty personal. Having our families and friends gather for our reception was certainly a highlight.

9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be? We're thinking of giving the West Coast a try next, so in that case,



I'd pick San Francisco. But, I could probably be happy a lot of places in the long run.

10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Why?

No. I always had a timer on my stay here. I'm so thankful I got to experience it, but it never felt permanent to me. It might be a hang-up from being an Air Force Brat. Home is where family is to me, not a place. However, I do hope to have an excuse to continue to return and see the changes over time. I'll miss it a lot more than I ever expected to. ☺

West Side Pistol & Rifle Range or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Shoot a Gun

SHAUNA O'GARRO

When I heard that there was a shooting range in New York City, I pictured it located on a dark side street or in a sketchy industrial neighborhood. However, when the day of my first shooting lesson arrived, I found myself standing on the corner of trendy 5th Avenue and 20th Street, trying to discern which of the nondescript buildings in front of me was filled with crazed gun fanatics. As I started to panic, thinking I had to be on the wrong street, my boyfriend stepped away from one of the buildings, grabbing my attention. This had to be the place, West Side Pistol & Rifle Range, where we had decided to celebrate our anniversary. If you want to shoot in NYC, West Side is the only range still available to you. For those who don't already have a gun license or have never shot before, the range requires you to take an introductory safety course. For \$65 you get a criminal background check, the gun safety course, 50 rounds to shoot using your newfound skills, and

a three month membership to the range.

As we entered the building, barely acknowledged by the bored security guard at the door, we made our way down a set of stairs that led us to the range, tucked away in the basement. The pings of a motion detector marked our descent. It was strange to think that only a few feet from the swanky shopping district, populated with stores like United Colors of Benetton, was a place where people were shooting live ammunition.

No one was at the reception when we arrived, so we sat on the couches in the waiting area. The place was clean, but looked as if it hadn't been redecorated since the 80s. We sat checking out the holsters, and bullets, and other merchandise for sale behind the counter. "NRA DINNER \$65" was written in childlike hand on a poster board hung near the register. On the floor next to my foot something flashed and I picked it up: a tiny golden bullet casing.

It was then that I started to get nervous. What was a super liberal, NRA-mocking, born and bred city girl like me doing at a gun range? Was I really about to shoot a weapon that kills innocent people everyday, just for fun?

Before I could chicken out or finish contemplating my ethical issues, my boyfriend and I, as well as several other people who had shown up during our wait, were led into the classroom. The introductory class teaches you how to hold the gun safely, how to load your weapon, and the proper shooting stance. There were about fifteen people sitting at little desks, causing me to have flashbacks to high school. Looking around the room, I was shocked at the diversity of the class. Women outnumbered men, and the students in the class could have been in an ad campaign for the Benetton up the street. It was a bit unnerving realizing that many of these people had as little experience as I did, and could potentially end up firing a deadly weapon in the wrong direction, namely, at me or my boyfriend. Again, it was too late to worry about that. We filled out our waiver forms, releasing the place from liability should we shoot ourselves or someone else, and then the instruction began.

Our instructor was a little overwhelming. He was definitely former military (it appeared that everyone who worked at the range was). He barked out the rules of gun safety, peppering his lesson with inappropriate jokes and every so often staring a student down and bulging his eyes to make a point. If you don't have a gun license, the only weapon you can use on the range is a .22 rifle. He showed us the parts of the rifle and how they work, the techniques so ingrained that he often didn't even look at the gun as he deftly worked its small mechanical parts. His voice filled the room as he authoritatively told us ways not to shoot each other later in the evening, but the class was still fun and the students felt free to interact with the teacher. After passing around unloaded rifles so we could practice locking and releasing the safety,

checking the chamber for rounds, and loading clips into the gun, we shuffled out from the classroom. We sat at tables outside the actual range, the muffled boom of the guns greeting us as we received our live ammunition. You get 50 rounds with the introductory class, and the rifles hold five rounds per magazine. We loaded our own bullets into the magazines as we waited for our turn to go shoot.

Once we were out on the firing line, "eyes and ears" (i.e., safety glasses and protective earwear) intact, our instructor let us start shooting, correcting our stance as necessary. I positioned myself as he had told us, body slightly turned, butt of the rifle against my shoulder, elbow out. I released the safety, aimed at the target, pulled the trigger and—it was fun! A .22 rifle uses small (but still very dangerous) bullets, so there isn't much recoil. You can even rest your head on the gun as you take aim. I shot my first five rounds, taking my time to steady my aim, as my arms were shaking from a mixture of fear, adrenaline, and holding the rifle in position for such a long time. When I reeled in my target to take out with me, I had hit mostly near the bull's-eye. I was a natural! Not really. Over the course of my time on the firing line, sometimes I did well and other times I wasn't even sure I hit the target. But for someone who had often looked at guns and the people who loved them as something to be tolerated, I realized that shooting really was an enjoyable activity. When you hit the bull's-eye, it's the same as hitting a jump shot in basketball or getting a hole in one at putt-putt. I was sad when I ran out of ammo and the fun was over, but I will definitely be using my three month membership again very soon.

Shooting is not for everyone, but it's something I suggest everyone try. You learn a valuable skill, and you might also learn a little something about yourself. ☺

West Side Rifle & Pistol is located at 20 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011.

What National Food Holiday Were You Born On?

MELINA HERMAN

Upon glimpsing Chad Ethier's name under the sender header of my Rockefeller email inbox every morning, I can't help but wonder what the cafeteria will tempt us with today. November 10 was particularly intriguing. Indeed, I never thought there could be such a day as national vanilla cupcake day. I admit I have been curious about the mysterious source of inspiration for Restaurant Services which could result in culinary adventures like meatless Mondays, taco day, or mushroom festival week. Thus, I decided November 10 would be the day I would stop speculating, and look it up. It turned out to be the day I started appreciating America at a whole new level, as I learned that every single day is a National Food Holiday.¹

Although still skeptical about the concept, I can imagine how getting suggestions from your calendar can be con-

venient. Don't know what to cook for dinner in November? Just remember it is fun with fondue month! Granted, I wouldn't immediately associate November 12 with national pizza with the works except anchovies day, March with celery month, or April with fresh celery month (why wouldn't such a common and delicate vegetable deserve two months, especially if fresh?). And with all the various flavors of cookie-, pie-, or cake-themed days across the calendar, I was somehow hoping my birthday would be on a slightly tastier day than national clams on the half shell day.

But besides the obvious fun they provide, what purpose can these holidays serve? Not very surprisingly, they are encouraged and sponsored—and were introduced—by industries and health or food organizations. For instance, the national hot dog and sausage council designated

July as hot dog month.² These holidays are used to promote diverse kinds of food or cooking techniques. Ah, crown roast of pork, you thought you could fly under the radar? Not on March 7. No more excuses to skip it, December 16 is your occasion to celebrate chocolate covered anything day. Even leap years get in on the fun. Don't forget to have some Surf and Turf on February 29.

With all of the different food organizations producing their own version of the calendar, providing a multitude of possibilities on any given day of the year—I can't wait till tomorrow to see what Chad will surprise me with. ☺

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Serious men, serious Mos. From left, Graeme, Andrew, Andrej, and Jeff. Photograph by Tina Marney.

Movember: Raising Awareness about Men's Health

GRAEME COUTURE

Inspiration comes in many forms. I never thought it would come in the form of a moustache. Months ago, I saw a picture of a young man on campus with an extravagant moustache surrounded by a gaggle of adoring ladies and thought to myself, that guy must be doing something right. It had to be the moustache.

The sight of this moustache, and its apparent effect on the fairer sex, inspired me to make my own attempt at growing a moustache. But was I strong enough to handle the inevitable pointing-and-laughing during the early stages of its growth? I knew I needed company. Fortunately, it was around this time that I first heard about Movember. The origins of Movember (Moustache-November) are not entirely clear, but the earliest confirmed report traces back to a group of young men in Adelaide, Australia in 1999. Their idea was to grow moustaches for the month of November and have people sponsor them to raise money for charity. While they initially raised money for different causes, as Movember grew into a worldwide phenomenon, the focus narrowed to promoting awareness of men's health issues and raising money for research on cancers that affect men. Within the United States, the money raised by Movember participants is split between the Prostate Cancer Foundation and the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

Once I decided to participate in Movember, I learned that there were actually quite a few men on campus that had participated in the past and even more that were interested in taking part this year.

With our ragtag group of seasoned Movember veterans and enthusiastic new recruits, we began clean-shaven on November 1 and ventured forth into the world of moustaches.

As this article goes to press, we are about three weeks into Movember. During this time, I have learned many things about moustaches. First, in the early stages, every moustache looks bad. But as they fill out a bit, only most of them look bad. Some guys actually look pretty good with a moustache.

I've also come to realize that the choice of moustache style is definitely important. While men less well endowed in the facial hair department are certainly restricted in this regard, those with lots of facial hair have nearly limitless options. One of the more classic options would be The Horseshoe, also known as The Biker, which is characterized by the vertical extensions growing down from the corners of the mouth to the jawline. (Think Hulk Hogan.) This is not to be confused with the Fu Manchu, which is similar in overall shape, but consists only of very long hairs that grow from above the lip and are shaped to cascade around the edges of the mouth towards the chin and beyond. This is just the tip of the iceberg in moustache styles though, with other options including The Handlebar, The Pencil, and The Dali.

Another thing I've learned over the past three weeks is that if you get a large group of guys, have them grow moustaches, and put the idea of moustache-related wordplay into their minds by calling

it Movember, you can count on hearing “Mo” used as a prefix for a long list of descriptors (Mo-larious, Mo-tastic, occasionally Mo-rrific) and inserted into a wide array of catchphrases. My favorite catchphrase so far? Ask not what my Mo can do for you; ask what you can do for my Mo.

More important than all of this, I’ve actually learned some things about men’s health issues, specifically prostate and testicular cancer. At the beginning, I looked at Movember as a great way to see what I’d look like with a moustache while being able to explain it by saying it’s for a charity fundraiser. But once I started telling people that one of the main goals of Movember is raising awareness about prostate and testicular cancer, I realized that I really didn’t know much myself.

First, prostate cancer is incredibly common. With the exception of skin cancers, prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in America, primarily affecting men over fifty. Prostate cancer in particular is one form of cancer for which research has the potential to dramatically improve the lives of many. The widely used test that screens for the prostate specific antigen (PSA) protein in the blood has now been shown to save few lives and lead to unnecessary treatments for many men, since elevated PSA levels can occur for many reasons other than cancer. Screening methods that are more spe-

cific for prostate cancer and tests that can distinguish tumors that are likely to metastasize from those that may not lead to significant disease would be a critical step forward for men’s health.

While prostate cancer occurs primarily in older men, testicular cancer is more common in younger men. In fact, testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men aged 18 to 35. Fortunately, testicular cancer is among the most treatable of cancers, with cure rates greater than 90%. Nevertheless, early detection and treatment is important, so any man that detects a lump in one of their testes should consult a doctor.

For those of us participating in Movember by growing moustaches, we are entering the final stretch. Blond-haired moustaches are beginning to be noticeable. Anticipation for the Movember-ending gala, at which participants dress in costumes appropriate for their moustaches, is in the air. Frankly, many of us are itching (literally) to shave off our ‘staches. But in the spirit of charity and for the sake of raising awareness about men’s health, until the end of the month, the Mo must go on. ☺

For more information about prostate and testicular cancer, including the associated symptoms, see the following websites:

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/prostate/>

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/testicular/>

The Top Five Pop and Rock Songs about Science and Technology, as selected by Bernie Langs

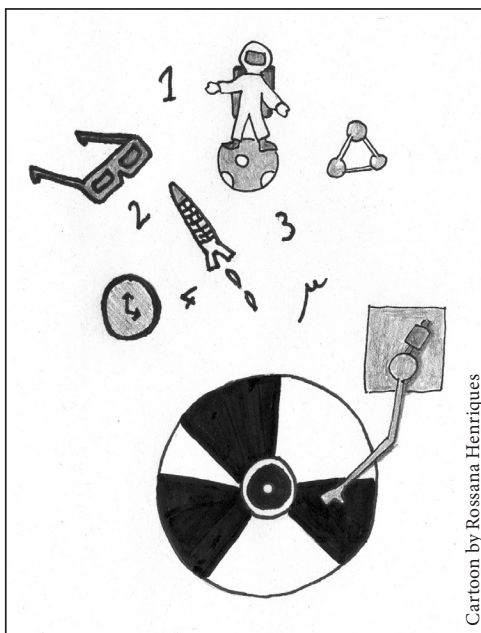
BERNARD LANGS

5) “Kings Lead Hat” by Brian Eno.

Best lines: “the passage of my life is measured out in shirts” and “the biology of purpose keeps my nose above the surface.”

Before and After Science is the title of the album and it sets the tone for the collection’s concept and overall feel. It contains some of Eno’s most accessible music, structured within pop parameters and not his usual signature synthesizer experiments and riffs. Another stand-out (from what I can remember on my LP, since it’s not on iTunes) is the meditative “In These Metal Days,” which contains his hit “Here He Comes” about “the boy who tried to vanish to another time.”

is alienated and lonely in his mission. I’ve probably heard “Rocket Man” a few hundred times since its release and will still listen when it comes up on my iPod or on the radio.



3) “She Blinded Me with Science” by Thomas Dolby.

Best lines: “She blinded me with science!” and “Good heavens, Miss Sakamoto! You’re beautiful!”

These lines, along with the song’s humorous spoken exclamations of “Science!” are complemented by a picture perfect clichéd scientist lip-synching in the video from the early 1980s.

This was when videos were still fresh and new and MTV was a novel idea.

4) “Rocket Man” by Elton John.

Best line: “And all this science, I don’t understand, it’s just my job five days a week.”

This song is a twin to Bowie’s “Space Oddity” (see below), in that the astronaut

2) Both “Space Oddity” and “Ashes to Ashes” by David Bowie.

Best lines: “Here am I, floating ‘round my tin can, far above the world” and “My

momma says to get things done, you better not mess with Major Tom.”

“Space Oddity” was written in the 1970s when one of David Bowie’s personas was that of an extraterrestrial. He brilliantly melded his movie role as the alien in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* with his underrated album *Station to Station*. It all started with “Space Oddity” with its dreamy guitars and the disconnected Major Tom manning the space ship. “Ashes to Ashes” was written in the 1980s and continues the Major’s saga, who is now said to be a “junkie” who is “strung out on Heaven’s high, hitting an all-time low.” I always thought the song was about Thom’s Catastrophe Theory—a “Major Tom”...whatever that is.

1) “The Scientist” by Coldplay.

Best stanza: “I was just guessin’ at numbers and figures, Pulling the puzzles apart. Questions of science, science and progress Do not speak as loud as my heart.”

As a fan of the Beatles and as a songwriter in their style, I believe that melody is the most important element in composition. The Scientist’s vocal line is chilling and beautiful at the same time. When Mr. Martin sings: “Nobody said it was easy,” one is carried along to that soulful place that music brings us to when it is at its best. ☺

From Staten Island to Central Park—on Foot What Inspires Rockefeller Members to Run 26.2 Miles

JESSICA WRIGHT

June 2009, Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University (RU) Convocation: a professor praises his graduating student and mentions, among a long list of other accomplishments, that they also ran the New York City Marathon (NYCM). This happens four times. At least one other marathoner is graduating that day. Perhaps his advisor now feels that it is a given: RU graduate students apparently run marathons, it is no longer worth mentioning.

Flash-forward to November 1: two RU staff members, Alex Kogan and Andy Gallina, find themselves all alone on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. Having been accidentally jostled into the elite corral, they are quickly left in the dust by runners with goal paces of up to six minutes per mile faster than theirs. Only eight months ago Andy thought the idea that he could run in a marathon to be ludicrous. He might have always believed this, if his own family hadn't agreed—a little too whole-heartedly: "they laughed hysterically at me." Now he is on the bridge with his friend, intending to prove to his children that there is nothing that they can't do. Soon a second wave of faster runners will chase them down, but for the time being they are almost alone, staring down an eerily empty bridge at the island of Manhattan and facing the remaining 25.2 miles of their first marathon.

Running 26.2 miles is no easy feat and although the popularity of the marathon has increased in recent years, it is still considered an unattainable goal by the majority of the population. Is there something about RU that explains why so many of us attempt it: is it our location, the support of our community, the very nature of those of us that work here; or is it NYC and the lure of one of the most popular marathons in the world?

There is no question that New York is a running city. Perhaps it is the fall-out from hosting such a large and popular marathon. Perhaps it is the intensity of working in such a competitive environment that drives people to the streets and parks to escape. Whatever the reason, NYC is teeming with runners. Jeff Smith, a lab-

oratory manager who has run in eight marathons (five of them in NYC), was spurred out of a long running hiatus when he found himself amid runners in Central Park: "I was wearing dress shoes, but I sprinted for about a hundred yards. My lungs burned and my legs hurt, but I realized how much I missed running. Being surrounded by all those running just made me long for it even more."

On marathon day, not only do these runners take to the streets along with thousands of others from all over the world, but it is esti-

imated that two million spectators stand in the often chilly November air to cheer them on. The enormity of marathon day in NYC inspires novice and serious runners alike. Alex describes cheering several times for his uncle (who ran 19 consecutive NYCMs) and feels that seeing the "support that you get from the crowd" encouraged him to run it himself. Beth Duncan, a long-time runner and one of those honored at the 2009 RU Convocation, had not run a marathon before coming to NYC and RU: "I definitely think watching the 2001 NYCM after moving to NYC is what inspired me to run it myself. The excitement of both the crowd and the runners on First Avenue is really infectious." Beth has now



Alex Kogan and Andy Gallina on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge.
Photograph by Brightroom Event Photography.

run six marathons, five in NYC and one in Boston. She qualified for Boston while cheered on through the streets of New York.

Although crowd support helps, marathon running is a personal journey that requires self-discipline, will power, and the ability, in Beth's words, "to appreciate deferred gratification." These are all traits of a good scientist. Joe Luna, a second year graduate student, took up running before entering the RU graduate program as a way to prepare for the rigors of graduate school. He plans to run the NYCM in 2010. Although the marathon he will run is still almost a year away, he has been working towards it for almost that long already, by running nine qualifying races in 2009. Joe likens the lengthy process of marathon training, as well as the act of running itself, to the pace of graduate school: "a long journey, so slow, so incremental, you can't rush it." For Joe, training himself to run, and



Jeff Smith (center) entering Central Park at mile 26.
Photograph by Anna Kruyer.

run well, has been like an experiment—an experiment with his own body and his own “limitations.” Adrian Baule, a Postdoctoral Associate, who ran his first marathon in Hamburg, Germany and also qualified for the 2010 NYCM, feels that scientists make good runners because of “the degree of [their] ambitions and [their] drive to succeed.”

It’s not surprising that RU members are drawn to marathons

because we are used to hard work and dedication, but is it also because we’re smart? A *Runner’s World* magazine subscriber study found that 93% of its members were college educated. Jak Fak, a Research Assistant who ran the NYCM in 2007 and plans to run it again in 2010, remembers that his high school cross country team was made up of the smart kids. He remembers the group, himself included, being “skinny and helpless,” but also running fast—and winning. Winning a lot more often than the football team in his football-oriented town. Running may appeal to those with mentally challenging lives as a form of escape. In its essence it requires very little thought. There is some strategy in racing, but ultimately it is the act of putting one foot in front of the other and not stopping—in the case of a marathon, not stopping for a very long time. Beth praised the role of running in her very successful graduate career because it was a way to “clear your head and organize your thoughts, no matter what type of problem you’re considering.” Jak and Joe both see running as a way to escape the pressing demands of their daily lives. For Jak, running is a way to find time for himself out of a demanding family schedule. For Joe, who lives on campus, it is a way to ensure, no matter how busy he becomes, that he has scheduled forays outside of the RU gates.

The precise reason why they found themselves at the start line that November morning was likely the last thing on the minds of RU members as they crossed the finish line in Central Park. They were likely focused on that pesky hill just at the finish, on smiling for the cameras, and on cherishing the experience they had had along the way. Alex Kogan had had the opportunity to be the cheered instead of the cheerer; Andy Gallina had taught his children a hard-earned lesson in dedication; Jeff Smith had translated several months of intensive training into a six minute personal record; and Beth Duncan had run her personal best and her first marathon since the birth of her daughter less than a year ago. However, shortly after crossing that finish line, it is also likely that they were thinking about their next start. Despite the

pain involved in running a marathon, and the fact that for many of the people I spoke with, the experience was even more harrowing than they had anticipated, they all planned on doing it again—and not just doing it again, doing it better. They planned on taking their experience and translating it into lessons for improvement and for personal growth—which is just what one might expect from someone at Rockefeller. ☉

In Our Good Books

MEG WESTFOX

What the Dormouse Said: How the 60s Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry, by John Markoff

Chances are that most days you sit at a personal computer, using a mouse and keyboard to enter information into a graphical Windows-based system. You probably use email, search for information, and read publications on the Internet. Many of these func-

tions are duplicated on small laptop computers, or even smaller cell phone style browsers.

With personal computers so deeply integrated into our lives, it is difficult to imagine that in the late 1960s almost no one outside of science fiction had any inkling that computers would become such a common necessity. Even science fiction greats like Isaac Asimov missed the boat, imagining a world-spanning

Multivac accessible to a chosen few rather than democratic, widespread computer usage.

John Markoff examines the work of a few visionaries who took the power of computing and, to a large extent inspired by the political ideals of the 60s, created affordable, usable computers that led to the machines we use today.

This is a story of research funding—of how a very few big thinkers at the Defense Department managed to pay for a bunch of hippies to develop email. It is a story of missed opportunities—HP turned down not one, but two opportunities to get in on the ground floor of personal computing. It is the story of how each generation of computing geniuses completely misses and dismisses the “next big thing”—and it makes you wonder what is next.

As a tale of the not-so-inevitable development of a ubiquitous technology, this book is a fascinating and surprising read; most of the heroes here have been lost in the popular mythology, and some big names like Steve Jobs and William Gates make only minor appearances (Gates appears with one of the first attempts to enforce software copyright—sounds familiar?). Markoff’s argument that the counterculture influenced the development of the personal computer is somewhat less interesting, and less convincing (especially when it comes to the supposed joys of LSD).

What the Dormouse Said will make you appreciate the box on—or under—your desk in a whole new way, with a greater appreciation for all the leaps of vision, culture, and technology that got us here, and will leave you wondering what comes next. ☉

Of Postdocs and Utilities

EUGENE MARTIN

The Postdoctoral Association (PDA) met with members of the Rockefeller University (RU) administration to discuss plans to add electrical utility charges to the rents of Scholars Residence tenants. The PDA requested the meeting with the position that additional utility charges are an effective rent increase at a time when NYC rents are decreasing and, as such, should the utilities be added, we asked that the rents be decreased by the amount RU will be saving in electrical costs.

John Tooze, Vice President, Scientific and Facility Operations, stated that RU housing is priced by determining the lowest possible rent that the IRS will not consider as to be an employee perk.¹ While NYC rents as a whole are decreasing, those rents tend to have started high in the first place; Rockefeller properties have remained stable. Additionally, the rent estimates have been made with the assumption that utilities are not included in the price. RU did not initially charge for utilities at Scholars Residence, while charging rents at Faculty House, because they did not believe that they had meters set up to determine the electrical usage in individual apartments. Recently RU found that they do have these meters and hence have decided to add electrical charges to Scholars Residence rents.²

It is the PDA’s position that while the above argument is rational, it fails to take into account that a sizable portion of the postdocs at RU, particularly those with children,³ are at their financial breaking point. While financial advisors recommend that people spend no more than 30% of their income on housing, over 40% of our survey respondents spend more than 40% of their incomes on rent. Approximately 8%

of the respondents are already looking for alternative housing—which is a challenge for foreign-born postdocs—and another 37% said they would begin looking if their rents were increased by \$200. The past years have been marked with RU both discontinuing its postdoctoral rent subsidy and cutting the financial assistance it provides for childcare.⁴ The financial consequences of this are reflected in the fact that 74% of our survey respondents contribute less than five percent of their income to retirement. Approximately 60% of the respondents are concerned about retirement, and many individuals commented on their financial struggles. While the PDA cannot directly say that this reflects an overall lack of savings, Virginia Huffman, Vice President, Human Resources, mentioned that there has been an increase in the number of postdocs asking for financial help.

Given this financial reality, the PDA made its aforementioned request that Scholars Residence rents be decreased by the anticipated amount that utilities will increase, i.e. that RU passes the savings it will get on utilities back to Scholars Residence tenants. John Tooze is forthright, and, to paraphrase, said that RU will not grant this request. In part, he mentioned that on the whole RU gives its postdoctoral employees a pretty good deal, that RU is in a difficult financial situation, and that, prior to coming here, many of us knew the economics of being a postdoc in NYC, whether with or without children.

Although John Tooze did not agree to decrease rents in an equivalent amount to the expected utility-price increases, he did express appreciation for the difficult climate that postdocs live in and the value that postdocs contribute to the university. As a com-

promise to the PDA request, Alex Kogan, Associate Vice President, Physical Facilities and Housing, agreed to look into a means by which current tenants of Scholars Residence can apply for alternative RU Housing prior to the mandatory two-year waiting period, particularly if they are interested in moving to the less expensive housing on Roosevelt Island. John Tooze also agreed to look into, with Rockefeller’s Chief Financial Officer, a means by which the utility charges could be phased-in. Finally, for those who choose to remain in Scholars Residence, Alex Kogan agreed that any request for an energy-efficient air conditioner would be filled as soon as possible (that is, limited only by the availability of maintenance staff).

On the whole, the meeting set clear that we postdocs remain responsible for our own current and future well-being and need to do what that necessitates. That said, if the cost of living at RU concerns you, the PDA encourages you to ask your laboratory head for a raise or to ask them to lobby the PDA administration on your behalf. ☉

References:

1. RU rents tend to be 48-50% below market rates; likewise, the median postdoctoral salary is approximately 50% of Upper East Side per capita income. It is noted that unlike other universities in NYC, RU does not seek to make a profit from its apartment rentals.
2. Part of the logic was that it is unfair to charge tenants in Faculty House rents while not charging tenants in Scholar’s Residence apartments the same.
3. Thirty percent of survey respondents replied that they have children.
4. Despite cost increases at the Child and Family Center (CFC), RU still subsidizes over half of the CFC expenses.

Life on a Roll



Birds by Adria Le Boeuf



Relaxing in Central Park: Lessons from a Local by Carl Procko

